

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fiscal Year 2004

We had a 5.6% annual increase in emergency responses in FY 04. EMS incidents rose by 5.5%, to 3,693 and fire emergencies registered a 5.8% increase, to 1,367 – the first time in the Department's history we have answered more than 5,000 emergencies in a single year. There were no fire fatalities during the year, but 13 civilians and 48 firefighters were injured during these incidents. Fire Prevention activity increased by 16%.

Unlike FY 03, there were no high profile fires, but many single room involvement scenarios in homes and apartments.

Of continued concern is the increase in simultaneous multiple incidents which strips our on-duty forces and requires call and student volunteer firefighters to be summoned to duty to staff the stations. Such coverage occurred over 300 times in FY 04 and can only be solved by increasing the number of career firefighters on duty.

Firefighter John Hannum retired in December after a distinguished career – John now is the volunteer Fire Chief in Whately. New paramedic/firefighters hired to replace him and fill two other vacancies were Mike Szewczynski, Jeffery Parr and Justin Cooper. We now have 24 paramedic/firefighters with one in testing.

Paramedic/firefighter David Dion was called to active military duty for one year in Cuba, while Captain Jeffery Olmstead served in Kuwait.

Our fire safety education program in the schools (SAFE) completed another successful year under the coordination of Captain Masloski. The Department's new SAFE trailer was inaugurated during the year as well. Rather than rely upon the County SAFE trailer, which is in a worsening condition, our SAFE instructors raised more than \$14,000 in donations to purchase and equip our own trailer. It is used in teaching fire safety behaviors to students in Amherst, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury.

Captain McKay and paramedic/firefighter Shanley continued to expand the tactical paramedic team, which interfaces with Amherst, state and UMASS police at civil disobedience events where medical assistance may be needed under less than ideal situations.

The Department's Technical Rescue Team, comprised of career and call firefighters, is led by Captain Sterling; they continue to train to handle confined space, high angle, trench, collapse and other technical rescues. The Team is expected to receive some equipment during the fall from a federal grant.

Captains Childs and Olmstead continue to assist our EMS program in terms of training, continuing education, and a quality assurance program for our paramedics and EMTs so that we continue to render excellence in medical care.

Paramedic/firefighter Sell continues as a member of the County's child fire-setter intervention group. Captain Johnson and firefighter Tebo comprise the Fire Department component of the Town's Fire Investigation Unit, along with a state police sergeant and an Amherst Police lieutenant and police officer.

Captain Childs and paramedic/firefighter Martell continue their work with TRIAD members to install signs for the “What’s Your Number” project. Over 1,200 homes now have street number signs posted in front yards to allow police and fire personnel to find them more quickly in an emergency.

Paramedic/firefighter Josh Shanley participated in emergency management issues with Assistant Chief Zlogar, who is the Town’s Emergency Manager (formerly Civil Defense Director). Firefighter Shanley also assisted with Homeland Security and Public Health issues for the Town.

Firefighter Adair and paramedic/firefighters Theilman and Szewczynski continue in their capacity as our mechanics, saving the Town thousands of dollars repairing our vehicle fleet. This summer they are re-building our Tanker so that we do not have to purchase a new one, saving approximately \$225,000 for the Town.

Our Call and student volunteer firefighters are an integral part of our Fire Department. We could not provide the level of emergency services for the Town without them, especially when all of our career on-duty members are functioning at emergencies.

The new Fire Station Study Committee began meeting in FY 04. This citizen committee, appointed by the Town Manager to determine how many fire stations Amherst should have, based upon our demographics and emergency call location history and future growth projections, is working towards a recommendation for the FY 06 Annual Town Meeting. The Committee is chaired by Lynn Griesemer, with members Ted Mone, Kay Moran, Larry Archey, John Coull, Lee Hines, Vic Zumbruski and Fire Chief Keith Hoyle (staff liaison).

We endured the Coolidge Bridge construction project for three years. Next will be the re-construction of Route 9 from the bridge east to the center of Hadley. We expect once again that Police details along the route will be instrumental in clearing the way for our ambulances to respond to the Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton in a timely fashion.

We were able to assign paramedic/firefighter Bill Klaus to assist in fire prevention inspections and plans review. At any given time, approximately 50 construction projects are ongoing that require Fire Department oversight for Fire and Building Code compliance. We have been overwhelmed in this area for several years; the addition of firefighter Klaus will reduce the backlog of work and enable us to serve the contractors and thus the public more effectively.

Again in FY 04, we won a federal FIRE grant that allowed us to replace equipment with only a 10% outlay of our own funds. FEMA forwarded us over \$332,000 to replace firefighter protective gear, 10 breathing apparatus, and our radio communications system, as well as a zodiac rescue boat and a snowmobile. We now have received over \$550,000 in two years under this federal program.

But Amherst has the smallest career firefighter contingent in the state for our population range. And we continue as one of the busiest departments in terms of emergency responses and fire prevention activities. We have to allocate additional full-time resources, as stress and injuries increase each year along with the amount of the work generated by the area’s population growth. The increasing number of times we have no personnel immediately available to answer emergency calls is of great concern as a matter of public safety.

I applaud the men and women of the Amherst Fire Department for their selfless devotion to duty despite the annual increase in our workload. And Amherst's citizens need to be recognized as well for their practice of fire-safe principles and the usual cooperative attitudes we encounter during emergencies and inspections.

Reports on fire and inspection statistics, emergency medical services, Department training, and the Call and Student Forces follow. This material was authored by Assistant Chiefs Mike Zlogar and Lindsay Stromgren, Captain Tim Masloski, and Call Deputy Chief Edward Mientka, Jr.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith E. Hoyle, Fire Chief

6 YEAR STATISTICAL RECORD

	<u>FY 04</u>	<u>FY 03</u>	<u>FY 02</u>	<u>FY 01</u>	<u>FY 00</u>	<u>FY 99</u>
EMS RESPONSES	3,693	3,500	3,361	3,067	3,055	2,983
FIRE RESPONSES	1,367	1,292	1,333	1,426	1,198	1,099
TOTAL:	5,060	4,792	4,694	4,493	4,253	4,082
FIRE PREVENTION	2,320	2,005	1,911	1,503	1,503	1,397
FIRE LOSS IN \$	473,460	895,000	438,350	342,285	423,800	439,715

FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Engine 1:	2001 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 2:	2003 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 3:	1995 Central States 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 4:	1999 KME 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 5:	1990 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Ladder 1:	1988 LTI 105 foot aerial platform with 1250 gpm pump
Rescue 1:	1976 Maxim 1000 gpm pumper
Tanker 1:	1972 Military 6WD 1300 gallon capacity
A-11:	1995 Horton Ford ambulance
A-12:	2003 Horton Navistar ambulance
A-13:	1997 Horton Ford ambulance
A-14:	2004 Horton Navistar ambulance
A-15:	2001 Horton Navistar ambulance
R-2:	2000 Ford F-350 4WD pick-up
R-4:	1985 Chevrolet Military 4WD brush truck
R-5:	1997 Dodge van
X-1:	2000 Ford Crown Victoria
X-2:	1998 Ford Explorer 4WD
X-3:	1995 Ford Crown Victoria
X-6:	2000 Ford Crown Victoria
X-10:	1995 Ford Crown Victoria
Utility:	2001 John Deere ATV
Trailer:	1997 Aerolite (SAFE Program)

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS continues as the component that generates most of our emergency traffic. We increased activity 5.5% over FY 03 levels, to 3,693 runs. F/F Clooney received his state paramedic certificate, with F/F Szewczynski expecting his this fall. This will increase our number of career paramedics to 25.

Our ambulance fleet is 100% complete again, after the devastating loss of our two front line Navistar ambulances last year to motor vehicle accidents.

We continue to provide EMS to Hadley, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury, and these communities pay a per resident fee to us for this service. Over 26% of our total EMS activity goes to these non-Amherst communities. In FY 05 the fees and therefore the revenue from this service will be increased.

Normally we can staff only 3 ambulances simultaneously. Only a third of the time can we staff 4 ambulances with on-duty personnel. Of consequence, then, is the number – 106 times – when 4 of our ambulances were committed simultaneously and 31 times when our 5th, or spare, ambulance, was engaged as well (the 5th ambulance usually is staffed by Call or student firefighters).

Nearly 40% of our total EMS calls required some sort of advanced life support (ALS) intervention. This is consistent with our experience since we expanded to ALS care over a decade ago.

The Coolidge Bridge project was watched closely for negative effects upon our EMS transports to Cooley Dickinson Hospital. There were times when our response was slowed, but no adverse effect on patient care could be noted.

Our firefighter injury rate continued to climb in FY 04, with 48 injuries (up from 42 last year). As we increase activity, and our workforce grows older annually, this rate will continue to climb unless we can increase our workforce to spread out the workload. Our career personnel have the highest rate of emergency calls per firefighter in the state. One could say we are the most efficient workforce, but we continue to note the injury rate and the stress that this workload creates as well.

FY 04 EMS RESPONSES

Amherst:	2,043
Belchertown:	31
Hadley:	754
Leverett:	61
Pelham:	68
Shutesbury:	61
Sunderland:	33
Amherst College:	73
Hampshire College:	48
UMass:	518
Other:	<u>3</u>
Total Responses:	3,693

FIRE PREVENTION STATISTICS

Building Inspections

Home inspections (Chapter 148, Section 26F and new construction)	426
Multi-family dwellings (Chapter 148, Section 26C)	4
Construction plan reviews	
1 and 2 family residential	48
Commercial and multi-family	50
Amherst College	15
Hampshire College	6
University of Massachusetts	23
Fire protection system installations and alterations	128
Site Plan Reviews (Planning Board)	93

Life Safety Inspections

Restaurants	64
Nursing and rest homes	8
Health care facilities	21
Inns and theaters	24
Fraternity and sorority	120
Public schools	34
Private schools	35
Childcare	44
Public buildings	9
Other buildings	4

Inspections and Permits

Oil burner installations	49
LPG installations	26
UST removals	25
UST installations	0
AST installations	28
Tank truck inspections	2
Fireworks and pyrotechnic displays	11
Dumpster permits	54
Total Open Burning permits	882

Public Education Programs

Open House	1
SAFE	61
Community programs	9
CPR and defibrillators	16

STUDENT VOLUNTEER FORCE

The 28 UMass student volunteer firefighters continued to augment our career and call firefighters. During FY 04, 8 students lived at the North Fire Station, and the students had their pumper in service at the station 113 hours a week (M-F: 6pm to 7am, and Fridays from 6pm continuously until Mondays at 7am). The remainder of the week, they are on-call much like our Call and off-duty career firefighters.

The students responded to 206 fire runs and 11 ambulances trips during FY 04, an increase of 35% from last year. Their training is similar to that of our Call firefighters. Those on a daily shift train 90 minutes during that shift, and the entire student contingent trains every Thursday night for 3 hours. We do not expect that they will function at the same level as our career professionals, but they perform a critical ancillary service and sometimes arrive first at calls, as was the case at the UMass Foundry fire last year. In these instances, it is important that they carry out their duties and control the incident until other help can arrive. They have performed consistently well for us in these instances.

Student firefighters staff one pumper and, during fire incidents, also respond with the pickup truck and extra self-contained breathing apparatus, spare cylinders and firefighter rehab supplies. They maintain our Command Board during incidents and usually bring an ambulance and a squad to the scene with extra personnel as well.

Student firefighters also attended other training facilities besides the instruction received here. Some of those sites were the state Fire Academy in Stow, the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the Springfield Fire Department Training Center.

In April, 22 new student firefighters began training to replace graduating seniors for FY 04. We should start FY 05 with around 36 students, but will lose some to attrition, as we always do. Whatever prompts some students to elect to try to do this job often is tempered during the 72-hour "Wonder Week" training that occurs one week before the college semester begins in September. Then, each student has to look within him/herself to determine if this really is for them. Usually 4-6 new students decide not to continue in the program and drop out during "Wonder Week" or choose not to return at all.

Most remain with us, and some do go on to choose the fire service as their profession, as evidenced by the 12 former graduates who now are career firefighters in Amherst. In October 2003, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of student firefighters affiliated with the Amherst Fire Department. Nearly 200 of our graduated members returned for this two-day event.

We look forward to another successful year with our student volunteer firefighters as they enter the second half of centennial service with us.

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSES*
JULY 1, 2003 – JUNE 30, 2004

* Statistics include fire apparatus responses only. Ambulance calls are listed under the EMS section of the Fire Department report.

RESPONSES by CATEGORY

FIRES:

Structure:	57
Vehicle:	9
Rubbish:	36
Brush:	13
Other:	<u>16</u>

Subtotal – Fires	131
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RESCUE: (includes vehicle accidents)	227
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HAZARDOUS CONDITION:	93
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FALSE ALARMS:

Malicious alarm:	52
System Malfunction:	246
Unintentional:	403
Good Intent Call:	75
Bomb Scare:	1
Other False alarms:	<u>16</u>

Subtotal – False Alarms	793
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SERVICE CALL:	55
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OTHER CALLS:	<u>68</u>
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<i>TOTAL FY03 FIRE RESPONSES:</i>	<i>1,367</i>
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TYPE of ALARMS

RESCUE/VEHICLE ACCIDENT:	227	Mutual Aid <u>TO</u> other communities:	13
STILL ALARMS:	1,082	Mutual Aid <u>FROM</u> other communities:	4
BOX ALARMS:	43		
RECALLS:	2		

FIRE LOSSES & CASUALTIES

FIRE DOLLAR LOSSES:

Buildings & other structures	\$437,025
Vehicles & other equipment	\$ 30,700
Other	<u>\$ 5,635</u>

TOTAL	\$473,360
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CIVILIAN FIRE INJURIES	13
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FIREFIGHTER INJURIES	3
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FY 04 FIRE TRAINING

During FY 04 we strove to review basic skills as much as practicable with the on-duty career firefighters, given the limited amount of time available between emergency calls and inspections. Likewise the Call and Student Forces focused on the basics during their weekly drills. Eighteen new student firefighters completed the annual week of basic training in August, along with the fourteen returning members of that group.

As in past years, our members were able to take advantage of a wide range of course offerings from the Massachusetts and National Fire Academies. Eighteen Department members traveled to the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland in September for a weekend of training on a variety of subjects. Some of the basic courses taken from the Massachusetts Fire Academy included topics such as structural firefighting, flashover chamber, drafting, and vehicle extrication. A few members took courses focused on their area of responsibility, such as arson investigation and fire prevention. In January, four new Call Firefighters graduated from the Hampshire County Recruit Firefighter program taught by the Massachusetts Fire Academy.

Throughout the year, a number of special classes were scheduled with all Department members to train on new equipment. Topics included vehicle extrication training with the new Holmatro Rescue Tools (“Jaws of Life”) and training on the new radio system that was installed during summer 2004. Some of the groups within the Department completed initial training on setting up and operating firefighter rehabilitation (“Rehab.”) at a fire scene. This function serves to monitor the firefighter’s physical condition at a scene, and assure that everyone is receiving adequate amounts of fluids, food, and rest. The Amherst Fire Department recently developed a model program for firefighter rehabilitation, which is being taught to other departments in Hampshire and Franklin counties. All members of the Department will complete training on firefighter rehabilitation during the next year.

The various specialized teams that have formed within the Department (e.g. Confined space/high-angle rescue, Search & Rescue, Tactical Medics) continued to train during off-duty hours within their groups. Some of these specialized skills were also presented to other members of the Department, specifically ice rescue and high-angle rescue. Two full-time members of the Department were appointed to the regional Hazardous Materials Response Team and completed the required basic training.

During FY 05, we will need to train on additional pieces of equipment that are being purchased through federal grants, such as a snowmobile and rescue sled for wilderness rescues, and an inflatable boat for water rescues. As time allows, we will also continue to review the basic firefighting and rescue skills that are the core of our daily work. We hope to send every member of the Department at least once during the year to live-fire training at the burn building at the Springfield Fire Academy.

CALL FORCE

The Amherst Fire Department Call Force serves the Town of Amherst by augmenting the Fire Department's full-time force with fire suppression and emergency medical services. The Call Force may be called in at any time to respond to an immediate emergency or to be available at the station when career on-duty resources are committed to fire or emergency medical calls. In FY 04, the Call Force responded to 42 box alarms and 34 calls which included fire alarm activations, motor vehicle accidents, and emergency medical incidents. In addition, the Call Force was called into the station 95 times to provide fire suppression coverage for the town.

The Call Force provided a variety of additional services for the Town. Our members assisted with activities during the annual National Fire Prevention Week Open House, as well as at the annual Student Awareness for Fire Safety Education (SAFE) graduation. An engine company and other support personnel were on stand-by during the 4th of July fireworks display, and members provided stand-by ambulance services at several large events. During two severe snow emergencies, a Call Force engine company remained in service for the duration. During this spring's busy open burning season, Call members received calls, provided data entry, conducted on-site inspections, and issued burning permits.

As FY 04 ended, the Call Force had 23 members, including 17 Massachusetts Registered Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), 12 qualified pump operators, and 7 qualified to operate our aerial platform. Fire apparatus assigned to the Call Force is a 1988 LTI 105' aerial platform (Ladder 1), and a 1999 KME pumper (Engine 4).

Training continues to be paramount in maintaining Call Force firefighting and EMS proficiency. In addition to weekly training classes and exercises, specialized courses were taken through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy and the National Firefighting Academy. Live burn exercises were conducted at the Springfield Fire Training Center and at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in Stowe, Massachusetts. Veteran Call Captain Richard Mears served as Chair of the Hampshire County Fire Defense Training Committee as well as a course instructor.

From September 4, 2003 until February 28, 2004, our four newest members attended the 2nd Firefighter I Plus Recruit Class, designed for call and volunteer firefighters and offered by the state Firefighting Academy. Serving towns across all of Hampshire County, the class was 150 hours in length and included all aspects of basic firefighting, such as fire behavior, search and rescue, forcible entry, self contained breathing apparatus, hazardous material operations as well as structural firefighting exercises under live, intense fire conditions. Classes were taught by state Firefighting Academy instructors and Hampshire County Fire Defense training instructors from Amherst and South Hadley. Congratulations to firefighters Ahmed Harris, Kate Kelly, Brett Morgan, and Bill Sweet, who, through this program, successfully became Massachusetts Firefighter I Certified.

Amherst Call Firefighters are ready to respond, continue their fire service dedication, and appreciate the opportunity to serve the Town of Amherst.